

May 24th, 2018

Horwath stands with Grassy Narrows, promises concrete action on mercury contamination

TORONTO – Following the release of a detailed community health assessment report, co-authored by community members and health experts, Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath committed to fully implementing the recommendations of the report, taking real action to provide change for the better for generations of families impacted by mercury contamination in Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (a.k.a. Grassy Narrows First Nation).

“Grassy Narrows is one of the clearest examples of how governments of all stripes have failed to treat First Nations with the respect they deserve. Indigenous people across Turtle Island have suffered deeply from the multi-generational impact of colonialism, and First Nations like Grassy Narrows have been denied the basic things that most Canadians take for granted, like access to clean drinking water and appropriate health care,” said Horwath, following the release of the report on Thursday morning.

“Today, I promise to the people of Grassy Narrows that an NDP government will partner with the community to fully implement the recommendations of the community health assessment. Together, we can give all members of Grassy Narrows First Nation the resources they need to manage the impacts of decades of inaction, reduce future harm, and build a brighter future for the next generation.”

Report co-author Dr. Donna Mergler has worked closely with the Grassy Narrows community for years, studying the impact of mercury contamination caused by chemical dumping into the English-Wabigoon river at a nearby pulp and paper mill in the 1960s and ‘70s. Her recommendations for addressing the long-standing health

issues include:

- A long-term care facility in the community for residents affected by the contamination
- Additional resources for physical and mental health care, including suicide-prevention resources
- Further study of wide-ranging health impacts from the contamination
- Greater access to supports such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, pain management, counselling, and traditional healing
- Regular examinations for mercury effects
- Adult education and job training which takes into account mercury deficits
- Programs to compensate for economic loss and food security programs
- Appropriate training for health professionals in mercury, and better relationship-building with the community
- Greater access to culturally-appropriate, off-reserve services

“New Democrats have been fighting for the people of Grassy Narrows for years, and our *Change for the Better* platform contains a number of specific commitments to the people of Grassy Narrows,” said Horwath.

“I’m proud to commit to implementing the full recommendations of the report, in close partnership with the community. This is an important step towards genuine reconciliation. Working together, we can build a province where everyone has access to the care they need, and has the chance to build a great life, here at home.”

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